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Keepin' It Real: Three Black Women Educators Discuss How We Deal with Student Resistance to Multicultural inclusion in the Curriculum

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When African American women teach within predominantly European American environments, there are unique challenges -- especially when the topics include multicultural issues (Alexander, 1995; Benjamin, 1997; Gregory, 1995; James & Farmer, 1993). Each of us has taught for several years as assistant professors in psychology and human development within predominantly White institutions of higher education in New England. Two of us teach at private, liberal arts, co-educational institutions. The third teaches at a large, public university.

While we have each encountered a number of unique experiences, we have also noted many similarities in our experiences. The most salient similarity has been encountering resistance from our students regarding the contents of our multicultural curricula. We define resistance as a defensive behavioral reaction that may occur when one is challenged to modify or to change one's worldview. Resistance often includes acting to protect oneself by circumventing or sabotaging the learning process by partially or "completely missing, misunderstanding, and ultimately ignoring the [issues,] responses, concerns, and actions" associated with the contents of a multicultural curriculum (Gilmore, Smith, & Kairaiuak, 1997; Ridley, 1995). Specific examples of resistance include distracting behaviors such as inappropriate chatting, rigid body language, rude facial expressions (e.g., rolling of the eyes, sucking of the teeth, and sneering), late

attendance or early departure from class, straying from the topic, engaging in tangential discussions or monopolizing class time, and challenging and/or questioning our expertise and the validity of the theories and content included in a multicultural curriculum. None of these behaviors alone necessarily constitutes resistance to multicultural curricula. However, in our experience, the constellation of these behaviors to the same degree does not occur in classes where the focus is on more mainstream psychological, sociological, and historical perspectives of human development and interpersonal relationships.

Our multicultural curricula include issues and theories pertaining to culture, race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, and alternative families. The majority of our students are open and engaging. However, the small percentage who do appear to display resistance can impact the overall learning process for all students in the class. These behaviors may not only affect the emotional climate of the students, but may also have the potential to undermine the sense of well-being and the comfort level of the professor who must negotiate the many issues that come with being a woman of Color in an environment that is mostly White. Although resistance can pose many difficulties and challenges, it is not necessarily something to be avoided, but rather, is a normal part of the teaching and learning process (when dealing with issues of oppression and privilege) (Tatum, 1992, 1997).

In our journey to transform our courses, we have discovered innovative ways to facilitate multicultural inclusion in a more comfortable manner for all the constituents involved in the teaching and learning processes. We have developed strategies that we hope have served us well in providing solutions for handling resistance so that the integrity of the classroom and the progress of the course are maintained. By being sensitive to resistance, when it is present, we can explore the sources of the resistance, and then provide ourselves and our students with the resources necessary to transform the resistance into opportunities for further growth and learning.

As we attempted to transform our individual courses, this issue of resistance was one we each began to spend a great deal of time discussing with one another. Through researching the literature and discussing our personal experiences, we developed three unique but related strategic plans for identifying, understanding, and resolving resistance. Part of our struggle with our strategies for transforming our courses has been the great effort that we take in striking a healthy balance between supporting students' needs with respect to resistance and yet

keeping the curriculum and ourselves "real." Real means staying true to ourselves, even as our courses evolve. It means not compromising our scholarly knowledge and personal experiences in our desire and effort to be accepted and respected by our students. We have each attempted to find a balance in this regard, and have determined that we must be sure to keep ourselves and all that we do real while enhancing the learning experience for our students. We now provide three stories of how we keep ourselves real, keep the course content real, keep the experiences of teaching, learning, and growing real, and keep the pedagogy and substance of our courses real. Michelle Williams uses her knowledge of and experience with the therapeutic process as a tool for handling resistance in the classroom and for transforming her courses. Michelle Dunlap discusses her attempt to appeal to the hearts and emotions of her students in conjunction with their intellects as a transforming tool. Terry McCandies utilizes cooperative learning strategies and technological resources to convert resistance into learning.

Building a Relationship: Therapeutic Models as an Answer to Classroom Resistance (Professor Williams)

I affectionately refer to myself as an "army brat" having spent most of my life on various military bases in the southern United States and South Korea. As the daughter of an African American man and a Korean woman, my physical features and cultural worldview are a melding of both African and Asian ancestry. Although I have not always found military life endearing, it did allow me the unique and valuable opportunity to interact with people from various cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. Being reared in a multiracial home and being exposed to a number of multicultural environments provided me with a keen awareness and appreciation for culture and the dynamics of race. As a result, my teaching, research, and clinical practice have focused on the experiences of ethnic minorities in the United States and the impact of race, culture, and gender on psychological and interpersonal experiences.

As a member of the academy, I am often faced with the task of teaching cultural issues to students with limited multicultural experiences in their own lives, limited availability of courses devoted to diversity issues, and limited exposure to professors of Color, especially women of Color. I am currently completing my fourth year as an assistant professor of psychology and African American studies at a large public university. I was trained as a clinical psychologist and teach several traditional psychology courses, as well as a number of diversity-focused courses, including multicultural psychology, Black psychology, and clinical interventions with

diverse groups.

I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to take several undergraduate and graduate courses dealing with multicultural psychology. The majority of my clinical experience has been with ethnic minority clients and my research interests are in the areas of ethnic and racial identity development and multicultural psychology. Therefore, when I was asked to teach courses dealing with cultural diversity, I felt more than qualified to do so and willingly accepted the opportunity. After all, I had taken the same courses myself, been trained clinically, and was familiar with the research area. Unfortunately, I had never taught a course on cultural diversity and naively assumed that anyone taking such a course would be as eager to learn about multiculturalism as I was to teach it. I soon discovered, however, that interest in multicultural issues does not necessarily preclude the likelihood that resistance to multicultural curricula will occur in the classroom.

As a clinical psychologist, I was trained to deal with resistance in a therapeutic setting but this background did not prepare me well for resistance in the classroom. Although the therapy environment is very different from the learning environment of the classroom, I believe some of the models used to counter resistance in therapy can be useful tools for dealing with resistance in classroom. I am by no means implying that students should be treated or evaluated in the same way as therapy clients. The inherent purpose of therapy is to treat a "problem" and a successful outcome is based on the reduction or elimination of that "problem" (O'Leary & Wilson, 1987). The classroom environment can foster change and growth through learning and opportunity but students should not be perceived as "problematic" nor be required to change in order to have a successful experience. Resistance can potentially occur for many students who must face the painful legacies of racism, oppression, and privilege on personal, historical, social, and institutional levels (Tatum, 1992).

There are several tools for minimizing the occurrence of therapeutic resistance that may be applicable to the classroom and to multicultural curricula. These tools include: 1) building a relationship that fosters open and honest dialogue including communication about issues of race and culture (Ridley, 1995, 2); normalizing resistance and creating an expectation for the occurrence of resistance (Tatum, 1992, 3); attending to nonverbal behaviors throughout the course; and 4) confronting resistant behaviors.

Building a trusting relationship is a key component of therapy, but is not always an assumed component of the classroom. I usually spend the first day of class getting to know the students and allowing them to know me. I ask each student to tell me and the class a little about him or herself. Specifically, students are asked their name, year in school, college major, reasons for taking the course, the expectations they have about the course or the material, and the impact, if any, race and culture have had in their lives.

At the same time, building a trusting relationship typically involves the reciprocal exchange of information (Taylor & Belgrave, 1986). At this point, I tell students they are free to ask me whatever questions they would like. Most ask about the course requirements and grading. I point out that most of that information is on the syllabus and ask if there is anything else they would like to know. The typical response to this request is surprise followed by several minutes of silence. The majority of students assume the course will be discussion oriented but do not assume that the professor will actively participate in the discussions. Through this process, I hope to convey to students that I am also willing to take risks in the course. Eventually, some of the students will ask personal questions such as "are you married?" or "where are you from?" but rarely do students ask me about my ethnicity.

Because of my biracial features, I often encounter people who are curious about my ethnic background. Most people and, in particular, students are hesitant to ask me directly. It is at this point that I ask the class, "how many of you are wondering about my ethnicity?" Invariably, about a quarter to half the students raise their hands. Those who raise their hands do so tentatively with sheepish expressions on their faces. I then ask the class to guess my ethnic background. I hear responses such as Hawaiian, Puerto Rican, Indian, African American, biracial, etc. to which I simply smile without acknowledging if any of the guesses are correct. Once the students have stopped guessing, I smirk and refuse to disclose the answer. I eventually concede when I hear the students plead, "Ah, come on, you have to tell us."

There are two important reasons for engaging in the "getting to know each other" and "guess my ethnicity" exercises. First, students learn that the exchange of information in the course is tri-directional: the students will learn from me, I will learn from them, and they will learn from each other. This exchange helps to cement a trusting relationship and to foster honest dialogue and communication. Second, race is made a salient issue in the very first class. Many of the students were wondering about my ethnicity

but no one was comfortable asking. We then discuss as a class why people were curious and why people were uncomfortable expressing that curiosity. We discuss what it is like to encounter a professor of Color for the first time or to encounter someone with racially ambiguous features. We also discuss concerns and fears about offending each other or saying things that are misunderstood. I use the pronoun "we" because I also discuss what it is like for me to be the first professor of Color for many of the students, what it feels like to know people are curious about my ethnicity, and my concerns with how students will respond to the course.

Students now begin to discuss some of their concerns about offending others or being offended by others. At this point, students are beginning to feel some safety in the classroom and we negotiate ways to be sensitive, respectful, and tolerant of each other. For example, we have a STOPP rule. When student exchanges become heated or frustrating, anyone in the class can yell "STOPP" which means, Stop and Take the Other Person's Perspective. In order to convey a sense of validation and understanding, we also learn active listening techniques, role playing, or experiential exercises. The STOPP technique has been particularly useful in my courses that are more ethnically diverse.

A second tool for minimizing resistance in the classroom is normalizing the experience and creating an expectation for resistance to occur. During the second or third class, I discuss with the students the number of different responses they may have to the course and to me. Some of the material will be new, interesting, and exciting. Some of the material will seem strange or difficult to believe and accept. Sometimes the course will spark feelings of empowerment and affirmation. Sometimes the course will spark feelings of outrage, resentment, guilt, and anger. There may be times when you will not want to attend class because the material is uncomfortable or disconcerting. There may be times when you can't wait to attend class because of something you want to share. These reactions are normal and likely to occur at various times for everyone in the course. I intentionally focus on the emotional reactions students may experience as opposed to behavioral responses. Resistance by definition is a behavior, but the behavior only occurs in response to a negative emotional reaction or psychological threat (Ridley, 1995). By normalizing the occurrence of negative thoughts and emotions, students are less likely to feel threatened when they occur and, therefore, less likely to respond with resistant behaviors.

A third useful therapeutic tool that helps to reduce resistance is attending to nonverbal behaviors. In all of my classes, regardless of content, I notice

and comment on students' nonverbal behaviors. For instance, if a student has a quizzical look on his/her face, I may make the following statement, "oh, I see a confused look out there, let me see if I can give a clearer example." If I notice fidgeting or dismissive facial expressions, I will take note by saying something like, "I see some people aren't buying this theory, let's talk about it some more." Several students have commented on how much they appreciated my attention to their body language. These students reported wanting to vocalize their frustration, confusion, or disagreement with the material but felt uncomfortable doing so out loud. Since I had responded to their nonverbal communication, the students still felt heard. By commenting on all types of nonverbal communication (not just resistant communication), I can address specific resistant behaviors without necessarily having a confrontation or making the interaction a focal point of the class.

Building a relationship, normalizing resistance, and attending to nonverbal behaviors are tools for minimizing or diminishing the likelihood of resistance occurring -- they will not necessarily eliminate it. How I confront specific examples of resistance will be influenced by the context in which it occurs. Certain behaviors are unacceptable and are confronted directly. For example, students must be respectful of others and, therefore, not participate in using derogatory or offensive language. Nor can students disrupt the learning process for others by engaging in rude or distracting behaviors. Leaving class early, engaging in side discussions, or making excessive noise are behaviors not typically tolerated in any courses and should not be tolerated in courses devoted to multicultural curricula.

It is important to note that all challenging behaviors are not necessarily forms of resistance. Some students may express cultural naivete or unintentionally offend others. In such cases, I will reframe the student's comments and model more appropriate language and communication. Additionally, some students may be critical of course material not because they are attempting to dismiss or to sabotage the learning process but because they are struggling to understand and apply the material to their own experiences. These students may be equally critical in other courses not devoted to multicultural curricula. Many of these students report the greatest growth at the end of the course because they have openly struggled with and challenged the course material in an attempt to understand it. Resistance on the other hand, is behavior that despite information, clarification, and justification remains antagonistic, critical, and nonproductive.

Overall, my intention in teaching multicultural curricula and cultural understanding is not to change students, but to have students leave my courses feeling academically, intellectually, personally, and interpersonally enriched. Ideally, I would like my courses to foster a sense of social consciousness and cultural understanding that can facilitate growth and positive change. I realize, however, that growth and change may take more time for some than for others and I try not to place unrealistic expectations on my courses, my teaching, or my students. I acknowledge that not every student will leave my course feeling enriched, nor will every resistant behavior be addressed or eliminated. I am hopeful that as I continue to grow as a grow as a person, teacher, and scholar, so will my courses and my students.

Getting to the "Heart" of the Matter (Professor Dunlap)

I grew up in Detroit, Michigan, the oldest of three girls born to an African American mother and a biracial father of African and European descent. I grew up in a multiethnic section of Detroit, an inner-city suburb known as Hamtramck. Hamtramck is noted for its ethnic diversity, and at the time that I was growing up, consisted primarily of Polish and Iranian voluntary immigrants, and African Americans. Hamtramck's motto was "A little taste of Europe in America." As a result of the diversity that exists within my own family, and the diversity of the community of my upbringing, I have always found multicultural issues interesting, and have gravitated toward such issues in my scholarly endeavors.

In terms of my career, I am an assistant professor of human development at a small, exclusive, private, residential, co-educational college. I arrived here five years ago, after having taught part-time at two other colleges while in graduate school. My M.S. and Ph.D. degrees are in social psychology, and I tend to bring a social and personality driven focus to my courses. I teach Introduction to Human Development, Social and Personality Development, Social and Personality Developmental Research, and Children and Families in a Multicultural Society. The course that is the focus of this essay is Children and Families in a Multicultural Society (formerly called Children in a Multicultural Society).

One of my goals in teaching is that when students leave my courses -- particularly my diversity-related courses -- they should be better prepared to meet a real, diverse, and ever-changing world in their work with children and families. I see my role as facilitating (or as one of my colleagues calls it, "orchestrating") student learning and their own potential for personal growth as they prepare to meet the real world and to work with people from a diversity of backgrounds.

When I first entered my current position, I was the only woman of Color within an extremely supportive department of allies. Because of my years of experience working with children and families of diverse backgrounds in my capacity as a counselor, I was offered the opportunity to teach a course entitled Children in a Multicultural Society. I felt I had much to offer and enthusiastically accepted the opportunity to teach such a course. In retrospect, however, I now see that I really had no previous images or models for teaching such a course. In all of my years of education, I had never taken, been offered, nor been encouraged to take a course that dealt -- even tangentially -- with multicultural issues. Nonetheless, my years of experience working with diverse families enabled me to gather resources, books, articles and other materials, and develop a multicultural course on my own. I began the course with great enthusiasm, but subsequently found the experience so frustrating that at the end of the semester I vowed that I would never teach the course again. Now when I reflect back on the experience, I realize that I had what some might call "a baptism by fire," wherein despite my good intentions and favorable experiences with other courses, I did not clearly understand the special support and resources needed for a class involving diversity issues, especially when the professor is a woman of Color and the class is predominantly White.

I unwittingly approached my first multicultural course with the same straightforwardness as my other courses. From the first day, I lectured, provided heavy reading outside of class, and facilitated discussions in class. After the third session, I started noticing very obvious signs of resistance. Some of the students were shifting in their seats, had folded arms, and frowning faces. In addition, class discussions did not seem to fare any better. I consulted with my colleagues, who recommended that I generate a list of rules for safe communication to help facilitate class discussion. Although this resulted in some mild improvement, I still sensed trepidation in the discussions and continued to experience resistance when I lectured.

The mid-term and final course evaluations confirmed my suspicions about resistance. Some of the students indicated that they resented the course's focus on race, culture, history, stereotypes, and media images, while others were offended by the exclusive focus on children of Color. My initial response was to blame myself for their reactions. Shortly after that, however, I tried to consider alternative methods for making my course more successful in the future. I felt that the course's primary intellectual focus needed to be supplemented with an inclusion of stories, narratives, images, and real-life voices of people who are living, breathing, and walking the path of multicultural America. I wanted to breathe life into my course

by offering real people alongside the plethora of scholarly books and articles the students were already encountering.

Several of my colleagues highly recommended an article by Beverly Tatum (1992) that detailed the different racial identity stages that Whites and people of Color experience when encountering and learning about racism and other issues of oppression. As I read her work and the comments of her former students, I could hear my own students' voices and see their faces and body language, folded arms and all. Her classic work had a profound impact on how I react to and approach the transformation of all my course curricula. Her article helped me to not over-personalize what was happening in my course. Tatum's work enabled me to view student resistance as a normal part of the learning process when those from more privileged backgrounds learn about the children, families, and developmental processes of traditionally disenfranchised groups. Acknowledging one's own privilege and encountering cultures and communities who do not benefit from such privilege can be an uncomfortable process (Fine, et al., 1997; McIntosh, 1989).

I would like to briefly delineate eight changes that I have incorporated into my course in order to transform it into a more inclusive learning experience for both me and my students. Although my course still contains some resistance, the resistance appears to pass more quickly and with less disturbance for me personally as a result of my eight changes. The atmosphere of the course has improved significantly -- even when resistance does emerge. Student evaluative scores of the course have improved markedly, and their evaluative comments have improved as well.

My first interaction with my class is to state up front that I am an African American woman teaching to a predominantly European American audience which creates an interesting dynamic in the course. Saying this unnerves me because I am confronting the issue of race very directly. However, I have to do this because I do not want my purpose for teaching the course to be misunderstood and do not want my intentions misinterpreted. I cannot ignore the fact that our racial and cultural socialization is bound to affect how we see the world and the individuals we encounter. I share with students my reasons for teaching the course. I also have students break into dyads to interview one another and then to introduce their partners (and their partners' reasons for taking the course) to the larger class.

During this first meeting, I ask the class to indicate whether I am the first woman of Color professor they have ever encountered. All but a rare few raise their hands. It is interesting that I tend to be the first female professor

of Color for my relatively few students of Color as well. I explain to the students that we must consider the dynamics and impact of my being their first woman of Color professor. I ask them to consider what this might mean for them and how it might influence their perceptions and reactions to me. I explain that we are all (including myself) vulnerable to biases and preconceived notions, and that we must work continually to explore how our own biases shape our thinking and reactions to social issues.

Secondly, during the next class period, I generate with the class a set of safe rules for communication in the course. These rules are generated by the class in "brainstorm" fashion, and each nominated rule is negotiated, revised, and agreed upon by the students. These rules have included guidelines regarding confidentiality during discussions, speaking from one's own perspective, trying to speak sensitively without obsessing over political correctness to the point where genuine sharing is hindered, and using the term "ouch" when one has taken offense to something said or done in class so that it can be immediately discussed or negotiated.

A third important addition to the course, is providing students with resources to help them deal with their own emotions and reactions to a multicultural curriculum (e.g., McIntosh, 1989; Tatum, 1992, 1997). As a first step, we generate a list of the emotions that people tend to feel when discussing racial and cultural issues. The list usually includes emotions such as anger, guilt, relief, validation, self-consciousness, etc. This is helpful because in the future, if and when such emotions emerge, the students are able to categorize their reactions as a normal response to working through diversity issues, rather than over-personalizing their reactions.

Fourth, materials aimed at engaging the "heart" or emotions as well as the intellect were incorporated. Thus, I have kept the extensive readings and lectures which appeal to the intellect, but now also provide a variety of other modes of learning, including narrative essays, (e.g., Davis & Rothblum, 1993; Edwards & Polite; Jiminez, 1993; Lee, 1997), major release films (e.g., Crooklyn, 1994), and a variety of guest speakers from the diverse surrounding New London community. I ask the guests to speak to my students "from the heart." For many of the students, this is one of the most cherished aspects of the course. They frequently comment on the tendency of the guests and films to bring the lectures and reading materials into a more vivid "real-life" focus.

The fifth change, involved expanding the course focus to include a greater proportion of family and societal contexts relative to the earliest version of the course. The course name was expanded to "Children and Families in a

Multicultural Society." I and my departmental colleagues felt that this would help students to more easily see or acknowledge the relevance of the life span and surrounding contexts of the child, family, extended family, race, culture, community, class, media images, etc..

A sixth measure that I adopted, included expanding the breadth of the term "multicultural" so that it embraced not only ethnicity, but also class, gender, and family configuration (e.g., single parent families, gay and lesbian families, adoptive families, foster care families, kinship-care families, new reproductive technologies families.) In terms of ethnicity, the focus not only included African American, Latino American, and Native American children and families, but also Asian American, European American, Middle Eastern American and Biracial/Multiracial children and families. The ethnicity and family configuration foci do not occur exclusive of one another, allowing time in the course to consider the impact membership within multiple cultures may have on human development. I envision any of these multicultural human development topics becoming a full course in and of itself in our department in the future.

A seventh change included my recommending to my department that we make the course a 300 (junior level) rather than a 200 (sophomore level) course so that students would have an extra year of maturity, learning, and experience from their other courses and life encounters. An eighth and final change that I attempted was to reduce the class from a limit of 35 to a maximum of 20 students. The smaller class size would allow students to interact more easily, to build a rapport, and openly express themselves. Unfortunately, departmental needs and staffing demands have not yet made the smaller class approach feasible. We will incorporate the smaller class size as soon as possible. These eight changes have not totally eliminated the occurrence of resistance in my classroom, but they have greatly reduced the negative impact of resistance when it does occur.

Being Oneself While in the Classroom: Competent, Flexible, and Fair (Professor McCandies)

Like other African American professors living and working in the United States, I trace my roots back to ancestors who involuntarily immigrated to this country (Ogbu, 1988). After growing up and living most of my life in North Carolina, I migrated to the North, like the majority of my relatives. Whether moving to New England, as I did, or to the Midwest, we believed that the northern regions of the United States offered African Americans higher paying jobs, better schools, and greater acceptance by White Americans than did life in the South.

Following the practices of many southern families, we have an annual family reunion, a time when relatives from all parts of the United States gather once again in North Carolina. Over the years I have effectively become a participant/observer at these occasions. As I encounter some relatives whom I have not seen in years and others I have never met at all, I have become keenly aware of our communal values, beliefs, and philosophies of life, as well as our shared prejudices and discomforts with certain racial and cultural issues. There is a deep respect for the elders: younger women will often turn to their mothers and aunts for advice on child rearing and resolving family issues while younger men consult with their fathers and uncles regarding major purchases and employment issues. We are open, direct, and honest in our conversations and decisions are usually made collaboratively. We also rely heavily on the church for support and guidance in resolving family and social issues.

Despite our communal worldview and maintenance of traditional practices, my family continues to harbor beliefs that denigrate our African American heritage. It is often said among us, that one of our greatest challenges is learning how to fragment our identities so that we know how and when to "act White." "Acting White" is perceived as an adaptive skill African Americans need in order to attain economic and social parity with White Americans. My family is not unlike other families where internal contradictions and tensions around issues of culture and race become an intrinsic part of our collective experience (Howard, 1996). Even today, sadly, family gatherings are punctuated with racist jokes using the "N" word and with comments about the exploitation, power, and control exercised by the "White Man." Although I dearly love the members of my family -- they are my links to the past and still-thriving traditions -- I have found my beliefs and values increasingly incompatible with theirs. This is the result of my encountering new historical perspectives and sharing in the cultural experiences of other races.

These experiences and perceptions, along with my clinical work and research with ethnically diverse, low-income families, now form the background for my career in teaching. Three years ago, I was hired to teach introduction to psychology, research methods and design, developmental psychology, children living in poverty, and to introduce multicultural issues into a psychology department at a small liberal arts college in New England. While the department was reviewing and revising its curriculum, I was respectfully asked what courses I would like to offer and felt prepared to teach. I confessed to the chair of my department that, although I had worked primarily with low-income families and with ethnically-diverse populations, my graduate program did not offer any

courses on multicultural counseling or seminars that explored multicultural issues in psychology. In response, the department chair and several of my colleagues provided me with a great deal of support and resources to develop a course on multicultural issues in psychology. As far as I know, no such course had ever been offered before in the department and certainly not by an African American woman.

This course, which attracted primarily first-and second-year undergraduates, was designed to examine contemporary issues and concepts relevant to multicultural populations in the United States. Students were informed that we would begin the course by defining race, culture, and ethnicity, and then discuss why such terms pose problems for psychologists. After taking up definitional issues, we considered the impact that race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and class had on psychological theories, research, and clinical practice. On the first day of class I went into the classroom prepared to create and cultivate an atmosphere where students could actively and openly engage in a focused dialogue about the course materials. My clinical work in providing group therapy had equipped me with a wealth of experience in nourishing a safe environment for myself and my constituents. Thus, I was confident in my ability to be an effective facilitator in a participatory and interactive teaching environment.

Despite my confidence, I was surprised by the unusual make-up of the class. In contrast to all of the other classes I had taught, this class was ethnically diverse and gender balanced. Fifty-five percent of the students were women and 45 percent men. Also, 73 percent of the class were students of Color. Naturally, I was delighted and enthusiastic to teach multiculturalism to a classroom of students who reflected the same cultural diversity as the course material. Because of the class make-up, I assumed the quality and intensity of the class discussions would far exceed those of any other class I had taught (Tatum, 1992). I soon discovered, however, that even in an ethnically diverse classroom, resistance can and does still occur.

Although I had little doubt there would be a great deal of personal interest in the topics, I wanted students not only to learn from the course material and from me but to feel personally impacted by the experience. I hoped the students would take the lessons of the course outside of the classroom and apply them to their lives and their relationships with peers. With these goals in mind, I immediately began to question whether my presence would influence the students' approach to the course and affect their participation in classroom discussions.

More specifically, I wondered if my race and ethnicity - a southern, African American woman -- would make African American students feel safer, more protected, and more empowered in the classroom. I worried that Caucasian students would feel threatened and fearful of being blamed. I was concerned about my ability to be truly inclusive of other groups such as Asian Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and sexual minorities. Knowing that I wanted to be respectful of all participants, including myself, I seriously questioned my ability to provide an inclusive, valid, and comprehensive perspective of multicultural psychology to a diverse group of students. Although I had considerable experience working with ethnically diverse groups, I was suddenly questioning my ability to do so in this context. I decided that these concerns related to my own insecurities about being a competent teacher and consulted with other colleagues who were teaching women studies courses or teaching courses in the sociology department on race, ethnicity, and class.

As I reflect on my attempts to provide an inclusive learning environment I have identified three phases of resistance that reflect my experience in teaching a multicultural psychology course to an ethnically diverse and gender balanced class. For each phase I will identify the type of resistance I encountered and then identify how I transformed my course to work through the resistance.

In the first stage, students questioned me about the course contents and requirements. Students immediately began asking me questions that I interpreted as signs of resistance. The types of questions I received were: "Professor, do you really expect us to do all the readings or are some readings more important than others?" or "Do you really expect us to talk openly and honestly about these issues?" A more pungent follow-up question was, "If we are to take classroom participation seriously why are there so many theoretical readings assigned -- don't our personal experiences and feelings count?" The above questions could come up in any class and be directed toward any professor, but I felt the challenging nature of the questions were specific to this course and perhaps in response to my being a professor of Color. Although my "gut" reaction was to defend myself and my competence by asserting my role as the authority, I felt I needed to attend to the processes that were producing the questions and understand why I was feeling so challenged by them.

I worked through this early stage of resistance by first clarifying my role. I explained to students that my responsibility as an educator was to create an environment that would foster the full participation and development of all students. I let students know that I intended to be flexible, and

therefore, was not impervious to changing the course contents and outline of events. Since I saw these questions as defensive reactions, I decided at this juncture to engage students in a class exercise. After informing students about the confidentiality of their responses, I instructed them to take out a sheet of paper and identify three topics they would like to omit. I then asked them to identify three fears they had about the course. I also wrote down my responses to each question.

Surprisingly, despite questions raised about the contents of the course, the survey revealed that most of us were basically satisfied with the syllabus. The students were equally surprised that no one wanted to eliminate a topic from the course syllabus. We agreed that at the beginning of the semester students may not always know what they want to learn, but may react negatively because they are unsure how the material will be experienced or presented. Therefore, I agreed to remain flexible and to re-visit the issue of the course content throughout the semester.

Although the students did not want to change the course content, they did express several key concerns and fears. For example, over seventy-five percent of the class reported being fearful that the class would get "out-of-hand." Another fifty-five percent reported being fearful of being perceived as racist, sexist, or homophobic. Other concerns included "hurting the instructor's feelings," and "having some students dominate the classroom discussion." The remaining time was spent discussing these concerns and fears. At the end of this discussion, several students reported being relieved and proud of my taking responsibility for dealing with what I labeled as "basic mistrust and trust" issues. This exercise was an incredible learning experience for me and my students.

Race, ethnicity, and culture were the central topics when I encountered a second stage of resistance. Students were asked to critically evaluate the definition of multiculturalism and the scope of its definition. Many students, especially those of Color, were against an inclusive definition that embraced sexual minorities. At this phase, resistant behaviors were exhibited by students' rolling their eyes, making snide comments, and sneering at comments that favored such an inclusive definition of multiculturalism. To preserve the integrity of the classroom, I established some basic ground rules. These included utilizing active listening skills, critiquing the idea and not the person, and lastly, keeping what was said in class inside the classroom to preserve confidentiality and trust. Once students realized they were permitted to openly challenge each other's beliefs and that their contributions would be recognized and affirmed, rather

than criticized, they engaged in more honest dialogue and made more concerted efforts to understand multicultural inclusion.

Integrating technology into the classroom, was another strategy I used to work through this phase of resistance. For instance, an electronic communication system was used whereby students could "chat" with each other anonymously via computer. The purpose for setting up the listserv was to acknowledge "underrepresented voices" (Schoem, Frankel, Zuniga, & Lewis 1993, p. 301), and to offer students who chose to remain silent in class, an anonymous and non-threatening way of participating in classroom discussions. Based on students' evaluations of the course, the electronic communications appeared to have empowered some unheard voices. The electronic discussions also helped students depersonalize certain issues, but at the same time, to integrate the theoretical class materials with their personal experiences.

Near the end of the course, students became increasingly aware of the ways in which social institutions impact and mold their beliefs and experiences (Zuniga & Nagda, 1993). As such, they began to assess various inter-group relations on campus. Students were particularly concerned about how administrators were handling multicultural issues. To help students connect their in-class learning with broader issues occurring outside of the classroom (e.g., campus life), this course was linked to another campus program in which the president of the college initiated a dialogue on race and multiculturalism. Although the issues in the dialogue group were difficult to process and not easily resolvable, students perceived the experience as an opportunity to build coalitions between themselves and other student groups on campus (Zuniga & Nagda, 1993). It was especially pleasing for students in my class to be heard and legitimized by school administrators. It was also incredibly rewarding for me to see students truly understand and integrate the course material beyond the classroom.

Teaching this course has been challenging, rewarding, and at times, frustrating. I have approached it with a sense of enormous responsibility to help students, as well as to help myself, overcome denial, hostility, fear, and guilt of the past and present. All of these emotions more or less underlie resistant behaviors. Participatory teaching, integrating technology into the curriculum, and linking the course to a focused campus-wide dialogue are three strategies I have used for handling resistance in an ethnically diverse and gender-balanced classroom. The interactions between myself and the students became as much the subject of attention, evaluation, and learning as the topics themselves. I hope my

students value their multicultural classroom experiences as much as I do.

Conclusion

The three of us have each experienced resistance to multicultural curricula when we began teaching diversity issues at our respective institutions. We did not know each other at the time and assumed the difficulties, fears, and concerns we were experiencing while developing and transforming our multicultural courses were unique to each of us. For all three of us, we were the first and only women of Color teaching multiculturalism in our departments. Fortunately for each of us, our departments and colleagues have been overwhelmingly supportive and encouraging of our teaching multiculturalism, as well as, our overall professional development. This supportive environment was instrumental in helping each of us develop, implement, and transform our multicultural courses.

Although we are each at different institutions, trained in different disciplines of psychology, and working in different departments within our universities, we all experienced the same type of resistance in our multicultural courses. We also each felt a personal responsibility and commitment to addressing resistance in our classroom and worked to develop effective strategies to transform the resistance into opportunities for learning. At every stage of the transformation process, however, we were concerned about maintaining our integrity, especially our personal, cultural and scholarly integrity. We did not want to be so concerned about, and accommodating toward, student needs that we diluted or distorted the curriculum. We wanted to always look in the mirror and know that we have been true to ourselves as scholars and educators, as African Americans, as women, and as human beings.

All three of us chose different methods for addressing classroom resistance: therapeutic models, expanded curricula and learning tools, and integration of technology and interactive learning. Interestingly, despite the different approaches, there were several common underlying themes. First, we each addressed racial dynamics early on in the course by openly disclosing our own experiences, fears, biases, and expectations. Second, we each responded to resistance as a normal process and not as a personal attack on our skills, teaching abilities, or competence. Third, we were flexible in our approaches and incorporated student concerns and ideas into the curriculum. Fourth, we established rules and codes of conduct that allowed for open and safe dialogue. Fifth, we utilized alternative teaching strategies and techniques to enhance the interactive learning environment of the classroom and sixth, we developed interesting and innovative strategies to enhance learning and motivation. As we

continue to keep it real and to grow and develop as teachers, scholars, and socially responsible human beings, our courses will continue to be transformed and -- hopefully so will our students.???

NOTE

Requests for course syllabi for **Michelle Williams'** courses: Black Psychology, Multicultural Psychology, and Clinical Interventions with Diverse Groups, should be addressed to: Michelle Williams, Ph.D., University of Connecticut, Psychology Department, 406 Babbage Road U-20, Storrs, CT 06269-1020. Copies of **Professor Dunlap's** Children and Families in a Multicultural Society course syllabus are available upon request from Box 5322, Connecticut College, 270 Mohegan Ave., New London, CT 06320-4196 or mrdun@conncoll.edu. Requests for a course syllabus for **Terry McCandies'** course, Multicultural Issues in Psychology, should be addressed to: Terry McCandies, Ph.D., Wheaton College, Psychology Department, Knapton 316, Norton, MA 02766.

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